

Proclamation 6924 of October 2, 1996

National Student Voter Education Day, 1996

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

This election season marks the 25th anniversary of suffrage for Americans between the ages of 18 and 20. With the ratification of the 26th amendment to the Constitution in July of 1971, which lowered the voting age from 21 to 18, our Nation placed its trust in these young people and gave them a clearer voice in the halls of government.

America's bold experiment in self-government has inspired over 200 years of struggle for a more complete sense of justice and freedom, an effort etched in the history of the Constitution and its amendments. Emancipation, women's suffrage, civil rights, voting rights—all of these battles were fought and won by citizens of conscience and conviction who joined together to bring our Nation closer to the ideals enshrined in our Constitution of full and equal representation and participation.

Since 1971, America's young adults have taken their rightful place in this march toward true democracy and opportunity. Living up to the trust placed in them and meeting this profound responsibility of citizenship, they have voted in large numbers and have played a crucial role in choosing leaders and defining issues at the local, State, and national levels. Generous in spirit, optimistic and idealistic in outlook, they have often proved to be the conscience of our Nation.

Now we are entering a new era in our national existence. We are approaching a time unlike any in our past, in which ideas and information will move around the world at unprecedented speed, and in which there will be more opportunity for people to live out their dreams than ever before. I strongly urge today's young Americans to step forward and accept the challenge of helping to shape our Nation as we move into the 21st century.

Register to vote, study the issues and the candidates, and think seriously about what kind of country you want America to be. And then, like the millions of Americans who have gone before you, exercise what may be your most important right—the right to vote.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, WILLIAM J. CLINTON, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim October 2, 1996, as National Student Voter Education Day, I call upon Federal, State, and local officials, as well as leaders of civic, educational, and religious organizations to conduct meaningful ceremonies and programs in their schools, churches, and other community gathering places to foster a better understanding of the 26th amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the rights and duties of citizenship.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this second day of October, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-six, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-first.

WILLIAM J. CLINTON